

Becca Jones

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\$5,000 WINNER
Walmart Customer
Corryton, TN

My mom passed away on June 9th, 2020. I was 23 and I became the mother figure of my family. My dad, who's 80, had a stroke which left him in a wheelchair. I take care of him: cooking, helping him shower and use the bathroom — just about everything. I also take care of my sister, Ashley, who has Asperger's syndrome. She's 30 but developmentally she's more like a teenager. They both live with me and my boyfriend, Matthew. We all moved from Florida to Tennessee where I could afford to buy a house. I love my family, but I wasn't taking care of myself. I didn't exercise and I'd really only eat if I was in the mood and I probably didn't eat enough. I was feeling very overwhelmed and I didn't have the motivation to improve my life.

My former Sam's Club co-worker, Patty Kennedy, encouraged me to download the Thrive app.

Patty became a mother figure to me and we have a very close bond, even though I'm not working there anymore. She listens and gives me a lot of helpful, friendly advice.

I started waking up early every single morning and talking to myself in a positive way.

I say, "I can do it," and "Today is a bright new day," in front of the mirror while I'm washing my face. I also do breathing exercises which help me stay calm and let go of any stress. Then before work, I go for a 30-minute-jog around the neighborhood.

For breakfast, I make a nice cup of coffee and scrambled eggs.

I prepare food to make sure I eat throughout the day, instead of just worrying what everyone else is going to eat. For dinner I'll cook zucchini lasagna or baked ziti. There's a lot of pasta going on in our house! Also, growing up, we'd have great soups so I'm doing that myself now. I make a good spinach tofu soup with chicken broth. Eating well makes me feel more awake, more energetic, and more alive.

I love going for hikes — being outside in nature helps me relax.

It's about taking the time to do something for me. While I'm walking, I listen to laid back country music by Sam Hunt or Morgan Wallen. Walking always clears my mind.



My boyfriend, Matthew, is always there for me.

We've been dating for going on nine years and he's helped me through everything. He was there for me when my mom passed away and he's so supportive of me doing the Thrive Challenge. Now we're spending more time together. We'll go kayaking and once a week we'll go for a hike then eat at a nice restaurant before going home to watch a movie. When we're out, a wonderful neighbor comes over to hang out with my dad and my sister for a couple of hours. She's very supportive and they all get along.

I've started reading poetry books.

They're really helping me. Right now I'm reading My Greenhouse by Bella Mayo. I love this poem called "Home Base:"

"The wildflowers sway in your direction
the lilacs point your way,
no matter if i can see you or not,
i can always find a bloom that will guide me to you."

I'm working in a bank and saving money.

I want to buy my dad an electric wheelchair so he'll be able to get out of the house and go out to the yard on his own. Right now I'm in charge of pushing him and getting him in and out of the car.

My long term goal is to be a doctor or a hospice nurse.

Because I took care of my mom and now take care of my dad and my sister, caregiving is second nature to me and I enjoy learning about medicine. So I'm going to start school while I'm working.

I have a positive outlook on life now.

I'm going to be there for my family no matter what — and for myself. I'm excited to find out what the future holds.



THRIVE